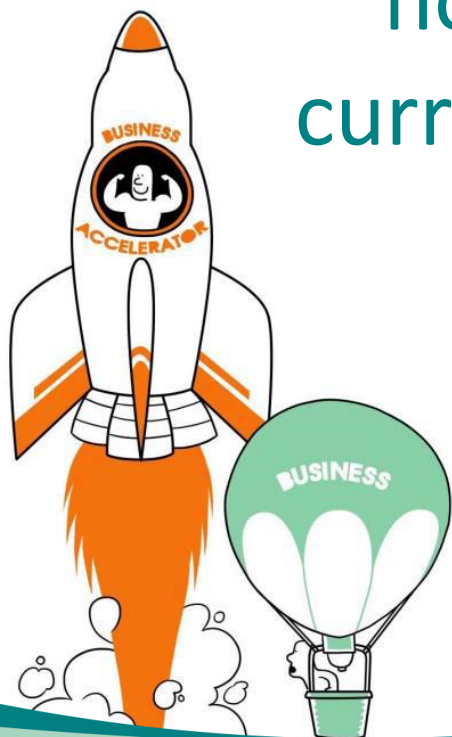




European Network for  
Rural Development

# Workshop on Promoting innovation in rural areas – now and in the future - How can the current support system be improved and simplified?’



Lisbon Agri-Innovation Summit  
12 Nov 2017

Edina Ocsko  
Jan Willem van der Schans

Funded by the



# Seeing the 'unknown'

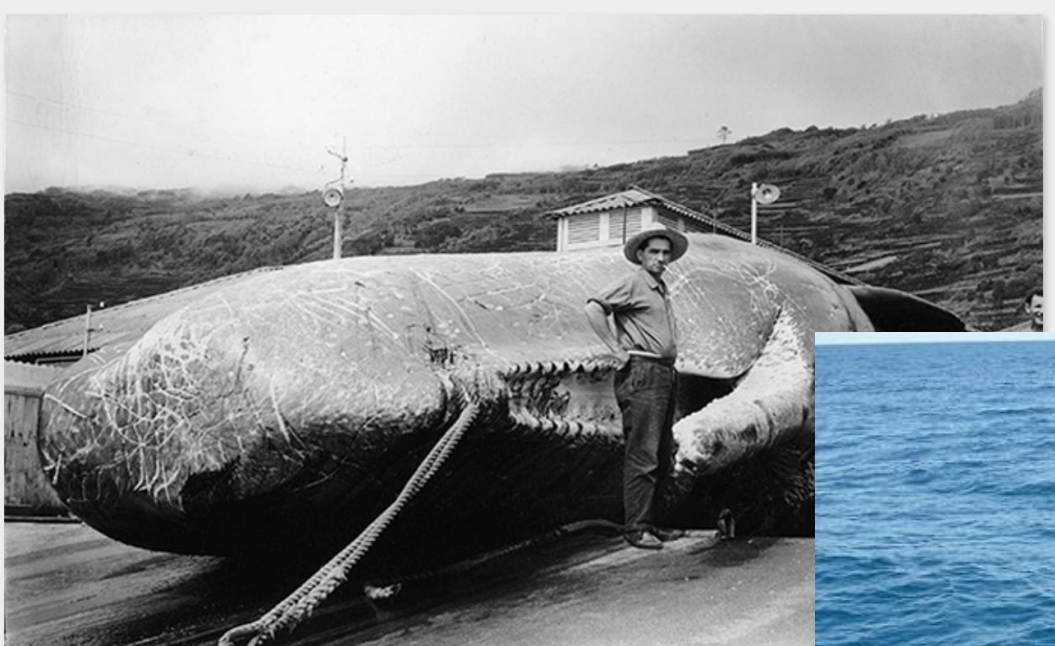


# Whale-watching



# Change:

## From whale hunting to whale watching



Whale Hunting in the Azores- Photographer Unknown



# Message 1

Openness to change and to new opportunities can lead to **the development of creative new businesses in rural areas.**

# Support:

## Helping innovative businesses to emerge



## Message 2

There is a need for business support tools that...  
**...allow the emergence of innovative business  
ideas, experimentation and risk**

# The question is...

How to ensure a policy environment...  
**that supports business innovation in rural  
areas?**

# What do we mean by accelerators?

- Help improve the success of start-up businesses



- Create a structured supportive environment
  - Peer to peer learning (cohort based)
  - Mentoring
  - Shared services (technical equipment, business support, legal advice)
  - Common space (close to, or including, a nice cafe)
    - Face to face contact to create implicit and complex knowledge spillovers
- Provide access to finance (Venture Capital, but this could also be public or corporate funds)


# Some recommendations

European Network for Rural Development

Smart & Competitive Rural Businesses  
Case Study: Accelerators

Working Document

Mobilising the innovative potential of rural businesses  
The experience of three rural business accelerators



September 2017

**Abstract**

This case study provides practical lessons from rural business accelerator programme examples from all over Europe: AgriEnt (in Greece), the Masterclass (in the Netherlands) and the Academy on Tour (in Belgium)\* to answer questions such as: 'What is a rural business accelerator?'; 'How can it trigger business innovation?'; and 'What are the practical steps for setting up and running an accelerator programme?'.

Accelerators are focused business support approaches that (i) run for a short period of time; (ii) focus on a small number of entrepreneurs with strong innovation potential or motivation to be innovative; (iii) use networking and peer-to-peer exchange widely (bringing together businesses, advisory, research, etc.); (iv) involve inspiring and innovative ways of supporting businesses; and (v) provide integrated business support (from emerging business ideas to starting up the business).

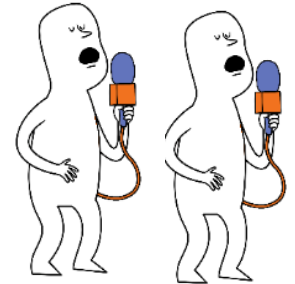
As such, accelerators generate local economic development (e.g. through creating new revenue streams for enterprises), it increase the capacity and self-confidence of rural entrepreneurs and improve local networks (of entrepreneurs, researchers, municipalities, etc.).

\* See detailed description of the three case examples. Special thanks to Thematic Group members Patrick Pasgong (Academy on Tour), Panos Madesis and Mara Tsoumari (AgriEnt) and Jan Willem van der Schans (Wageningen Economic Research).

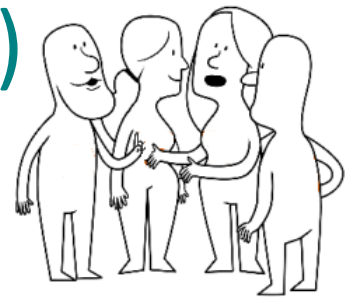
- Dynamic demand led approach
- Organise around challenges rather than sectors (new coalitions)
- Committed initiators (passion for entrepreneurship and innovation)
- Pilot and test for refining the programme
- Multiple funding sources
- Accelerators may not yield immediate results

# What do we have time for?

- Two short presentation on rural digital hubs & Q&A (~30min)



- Discussion in small groups (~40min)



# Discussion questions

- What are the main **challenges / needs** of supporting innovative businesses in rural areas?
- How **policies/ support tools** can be improved to better support innovative rural businesses?



# Discussion in groups (40min)

Choose your group:

- I'd like to discuss how **policies can contribute** the best to business innovation
- I'm interested in **the accelerator approach/** exchange of experience (learning network)
- I'd like to discuss other practical innovative **business support approaches**

# Discussion questions

Challenges

Recommendations


# Some recommendations

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